HUD Sustainable Communities Initiative

Office of Sustainable Housing and Communities

Cultivating Vital, High Opportunity Places



Columbia, TN: James Campbell Corridor Project

Columbia's Dire Straits

The economic downturn has been hard on Columbia, TN, (pop. 34,681) where a loss in manufacturing jobs has put the city in dire straits. Officially recognized as an economically distressed "microurban" area by the U.S. Department of Agriculture, 20 percent of Columbia residents live below the poverty line. When compared to other Tennessee cities, Columbia has the highest unemployment rate of any municipality of its size and third slowest growth rate.

With help from the HUD Sustainable Communities Initiative, Columbia is restoring past prosperity by meeting future needs. Their work begins with James Campbell Boulevard. Envisioned as the town's economic engine, James Campbell Boulevard is now a through-road rather than a main street at the center of community life. Projections suggest that the construction of the new boulevard could reduce annual vehicle miles traveled by 272,000 through the new use of multi-modal facilities; create 109 jobs during construction; and increase property values by at least 12%, or \$6.9 million, for all properties along the corridor through beautification efforts.

"Livability is Synonymous with Economic Development"

In the past, James Campbell Boulevard was Columbia's commercial core. The boulevard carried abundant car traffic leading to the local mall. Now a dilapidated relic, the mall no longer serves residents and the boulevard is unsafe and unsuitable for Columbia's growing bike and pedestrian traffic. To revive James Campbell's role as a center for commerce, the city has envisioned the mall redevelopment as an economically vital "lifestyle center" where one can live, work and shop. The boulevard will be transformed to accommodate commuters of all types. It is projected that the new center will support 2,200 new jobs and 400,000 square feet of new housing in a walkable, urban environment.

Description

Responding to a decline in economic activity accompanying the closure of a local Saturn plant, the James Campbell Corridor Project will produce new zoning plans for the commercial corridor and decaying shopping mall.

Funding

- 2010 HUD Community Challenge Planning Grant: \$250,000
- City of Columbia: \$100,000

Local Partners

Columbia Redevelopment and Housing Corporation South Columbia Business Association Columbia Rotary Club Columbia Kiwanis Club

Achievements

- The James Campbell Corridor has attracted \$7.5 million in new investment since Columbia was awarded its Sustainable Communities grant.
- The Boulevard 2050 & Tomorrow Plan identified numerous inefficiencies in land use that will save taxpayer money when rectified.
- The Corridor Project brought together local business leaders, city officials, and concerned citizens to forge the future of Columbia.

For more information visit:

http://columbiatn.com/JCBoulevard.htm hud.gov/sustainability

These changes will make Columbia more hospitable for businesses and people alike. "As a city in decline, we were really looking for a catalyst for new investment," Columbia Planning Director Norman Wright stated. "For us, livability was synonymous with economic development."



A Citizen-Led Effort

The James Campbell Corridor Project was community led, through and through. The South Columbia Business Association, an organization representing everyone from the local photographer to the Maury Regional Medical Center, catalyzed the project by requesting the town begin a new planning process. After Columbia received the grant, the core partners held a seven day charette, or community design forum, to assess the public's aspirations for the corridor. Residents poured over maps and charts, deciding what was best for the strip. The project had near daily coverage in the local newspaper. The final corridor plan, called The Boulevard 2050 & Tomorrow, directly addresses residents' concerns.



Columbia's Sustainable Communities grant will help transform the James Campbell corridor from an antiquated through-road to a bustling, community space.

Reinvesting in James Campbell Boulevard

As Columbia shifts from planning to implementation, they will apply their collaborative approach to the Columbia Mall. Developing the anticipated lifestyle center, efforts are underway to transform one of the mall's large, vacant storefronts into a civic space that will enhance the city's image and encourage future development. The Maury Regional Medical Center has invested \$2 million in the mall project.

In total, James Campbell Boulevard has attracted \$7.5 million of private investment since its Sustainable Communities grant was announced. The auto-plant in nearby Spring Hill reopened in November 2011, complementing all the work Columbia has done to bolster their economy. Columbia's future looks bright. Reinvigorated by its grant work, the James Campbell Corridor is proof that livability and economic growth go hand in hand.

HUD SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES INITIATIVE IN TENNESSEE

The HUD Sustainable Communities Initiative has been active throughout the Volunteer State, building capacity for sustainable development, bringing together diverse stakeholders, and generating economic recovery.

MEMPHIS

In Memphis, the integrated housing, transportation, and economic development strategy employed by an FY2010 Community Challenge Grant is encouraging investment in the district surrounding Memphis International Airport. The strategy developed through the grant will leverage the Aerotropolis Initiative and logistics assets that have led to the attraction and retention of nearly 3,000 jobs in the area. Additionally, there are another 3,000 new jobs committed to the area by companies such as FedEx, Electrolux, Mitsubishi Electric Power, and Nucor Steel. As part of the federal effort to focus government resources, Memphis has also been chosen as a site for the Strong Cities, Strong Communities initiative, a pilot program that will utilize local-federal partnerships to build resilient, regional economies.

KNOXVILLE

Poor public health threatens the quality of life in the Knoxville area, where auto-oriented development has increased air pollution and made it hard for residents to walk and bike around their neighborhoods. With obesity and asthma rates well above the national average, Knoxville is using a Sustainable Communities Regional Planning grant to convene a Healthy Communities working group that is identifying opportunities to improve residents' health and well-being. Ultimately, these opportunities will materialize in the form of new programs and services for residents.